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EDITORIAL

THE month of May is associated in the minds of Catholics with a special emphasis upon their perennial devotion to our Blessed Lady. This devotion is a highly developed and integral element in the historic tradition of Christendom, common to East and West alike. In the West however it has been, as it has never been in the East, one of the central points of religious controversy, often encountering the most rooted and bitter hostility on the part of our separated brethren. The definition of the Assumption as an article of Catholic faith by our present Holy Father on All Saints Day 1950 brought this largely latent hostility once more into the open.

The protests then made served to show that non-Catholics, however well disposed towards the Faith, find it very difficult not to suspect that Catholic love for our Lady, and the freedom and exuberance of its expression, trench in some way upon the supreme prerogative of her Son in the work of redemption. Every page of the New Testament demonstrates this prerogative to be unique, exclusive and in no way to be usurped by any created being, however holy, called to however high a vocation. Catholics are accused therefore of distorting the New Testament gospel and the primitive tradition. Failing to appreciate to the full the true and complete humanity of the Word made Flesh, they have, it is asserted, exalted a human being, God's Mother, to what is equivalent to a place within the incommunicable nature of the Godhead, paying her, in effect, divine honours.

It is in fact true that the exuberant language of love and devotion does at times go beyond theological precision, and may even appear to attribute to Mary grace-giving powers which belong to God alone. But to those within the family of Christ's Mystical Body this language of love is perfectly understood, and even when it sounds excessive can be allowed for and pardoned. For there is in the faithful, whether simple or learned, a firmly based spiritual instinct which prevents them falling a prey to the sin of an idolatry which would attribute to Mary a power that is her Son's and his alone. Catholics do not come near to thinking that our Lady is a kind of goddess; they know only that she

God's Mother, a human mother who ministered our human nature to the eternal God when he sought it, who was supremely faithful in her motherhood and everything it involved, and therefore supremely holy. They are convinced that her prayers must be universal prayers, powerful above all others because of her humble co-operation in a salvation that was universal. For this reason they venerate her with the highest honour and worship that can be given to one who is yet a creature like themselves.

We Catholics claim that this doctrine concerning our Lady's place in the scheme of redemption is rooted in Scripture because it is rooted in the Scriptural doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word. The very documents that have crowned the long development of Marian teaching with the definition of her Immaculate Conception and Bodily Assumption make this claim unequivocally. The Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* which defined the Assumption says: 'All the arguments and considerations of the Fathers and theologians rest on Sacred Scripture for their ultimate foundation. The Scriptures present the beloved Mother of God as most intimately united with her divine Son, as ever sharing his lot. Hence it seems all but impossible to see her who conceived Christ . . . as separated from him, if not in soul yet in body, after her life on earth was over. . . . Seeing that by preserving her from the corruption of the tomb he could give her such great honour, we must believe that he actually did so. . . . Hence, as Christ's glorious resurrection was an essential part and final sign of the victory over sin and death, in like manner the struggle which the Blessed Virgin endured in common with her Son was to end in the glorification of her virginal body'. The glory of Mary was and is *solely* for the sake of her Son, and apart from him and from his redemptive work she would be nothing.

But not all Protestants share the suspicion and hostility of the majority to Catholic teaching about our Lady. We print below by kind permission of the editor of the *Menevia Record*, the interesting quarterly magazine of the Welsh diocese of that name, in the current number of which it appears, a literal translation of a poem by the well known Baptist preacher and seminary professor, Gwili (1872-1936). Gwili was one of a number of individual Welsh Protestants who have recognised the importance of our Lady because of their fervent faith in the Godhead of her Son. There is hostility to Catholic *doctrines* of our Lady among

Protestants and Anglicans, but it is because these doctrines are not yet understood as Gwili came to understand them.

★ ★ ★ ★

Hail blessed mother of Jesus: the AVE of heaven and earth be to thee! Let me, after an age of silence, approach thee with my belated praise in thy honour.

There was a day in Wales when the praise of the mother of my Lord was on every true tongue. From every valley arose the incense of worship: on every mountain was remembered the hill where thou didst suffer.

Thou didst hear a thousand anthems of the Muse of the great poets, to thy gentle lips and countenance. How many strings sang thy praise long ago from the banks of Chwyd to the Vale of Neath!

The noble monks, lovable and sweet-songed, gentle protectors of all peaceful learning, for long ages in Wales, placed from dawn to vespers their gift on the altar of the Mother of our God.

Thy purity was in Welsh nuns, who long sought thy shining grace, O Virgin Mother, a thousand times purer than the fine snow on the untrodden hillsides of my country.

Garden herbs and the blessed flowers were a treasure for my country bearing Mary's name. And our consecrated Churches were tranquil under thy patronage, Virgin Mother of the Word.

The sound of thy evening bell as men went homewards made my fathers kneel gently at bedside and doorway. No ship left harbour without begging protection and fortune from the White Star of the Sea.

Now the joyful chant has died away at the doors of many churches, once enchanted places, and there arises no more from the host of altars the sweet scents of gentle prayer to thee.

Forgive us, tender Virgin, if we have learned to pay thee less respect than Heaven would like, because we have loved the Son whom thou didst love so much, afraid lest we honoured thee more than him.

Let us be taught, O blessed Virgin, once again to pay our country's debt of praise to thee, and when Christendom calls thee blessed, let no lip in holy Wales be dumb.

OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL

REGINALD GINNS, O.P.

OUR frequent salutation of the Blessed Virgin as Mother of Good Counsel in the Litany of Loreto makes us familiar with the above title, even if we are not acquainted with the picture which goes by the name of our Lady of Good Counsel. This ancient painting has been eloquently described as exquisitely humane and tender . . . the small Child has his right arm round his Mother's neck, his left hand catches at the edge of her dress. His little face is turned upwards towards her; he is certainly whispering to her—but, asking her something? Telling her some small childish sentence, or even word, or not even so much as a formed word, if you think of him as still too tiny a babe to make a whole word? . . . Anyhow, a mother's instinct always understands what her baby means, and often, what her grown-up means, better even than his father does. . . . But here, in this picture, the gentle, attentive, down-turned face of Mary is certainly full of understanding; and what her Child is saying to her goes always to increase the treasure of that knowledge which she "kept" and "pondered in her heart", till it became an inexhaustible fount of wisdom from which she could draw Good Counsel to impart to those who should ask it of her.¹

They will tell you at Genazzano, a little town some thirty miles east of Rome, that the picture appeared there mysteriously, no one knows from where. It is said to be painted on a thin film of plaster, like a fresco without any supporting wall. But whatever the true facts of the matter, it is not surprising that Genazzano has long been a place of devotion and pilgrimage for the people of the neighbourhood. And here we are reminded that not many miles away is the little town of Carpineto where Pope Leo XIII. saw the light of day. Remembering his own great love and devotion for the Mother of God, we cannot doubt that he never forgot how he had been born under her shadow. At any rate, he was who added to the Litany of Loreto the invocation *Mater dei Consilii*. This was in April 1903, and it was almost his last

.C. Martindale. *Our Blessed Lady*, pp. 203-5.

act; he died in the following July. Remembering also what a great upholder of tradition he was, at a time when the danger of modernism was threatening the Church, we may rely upon it that there was nothing new or untraditional in this last act of his. In fact he did nothing more than restore to our Blessed Lady one of her most ancient titles.

In his study of the Litany of Loreto Fr de Santi, S.J.,² points out that most of its invocations are mere repetitions, in a shorter or simplified form, of the titles given to our Lady in litanies that are older by several centuries than the Litany of Loreto, which he is unable to trace back further than the beginning of the sixteenth century. He quotes an instance from an ancient codex he discovered in the library of St Mark's at Venice which dates from the end of the thirteenth century, though its contents may well be very much older. It contains a litany which runs to seventy-five invocations of the style given in the following examples:

Mother inviolate	Flower of Patriarchs
Immaculate Virgin	Treasure of Apostles
Stair of Heaven	Desire of Prophets
Gate of Paradise	Praise of Martyrs
Unfading Rose	Splendour of Virgins
Brightest Star of Heaven	Beauty of Angels
Our Advocate	Mistress of Angels
Temple of the Holy Ghost	Queen of Heaven
Fountain of True Wisdom	
Mother of True Counsel	

It is easy to recognize the origin of the Litany of Loreto. The mere list of these honorific titles bestowed on our Lady in ancient times disposes very effectively of the objection we sometimes hear, that the glorification of Mary is an exaggeration of modern times without any traditional grounds in the Church. And in this connection it may be remarked that even in those days the Church was on her guard against anything that savoured of exaggeration. It cannot escape notice that some of the above titles no longer find a place in the litany of our Lady, but are reserved for Christ her Son. Fr de Santi observes that in 1571 the Dominican Pius issued a decree prohibiting all the offices of the Blessed Virgin then in use, on the ground that they contained statements which failed to meet with theological approbation. In their stead

² Cf. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, sub v.

substituted a new *Officium Beatae Virginis* from which had been cut out the offending expressions. The fact that the new office contained no litany apparently led to the conclusion in some quarters that the Litany of Loreto also fell under the ban. Consequently, in order that the ancient custom might be preserved of singing a litany to our Lady on Saturday evening, a new one in her honour was composed of salutations drawn from the Scriptures. This might suit the theologians but it did not suit the ordinary faithful, who are commonly very definite about their likes and dislikes, with a strong disinclination to be driven by the liturgical experts. The old Litany of Loreto crept back into use again, and this time all doubts about its strict orthodoxy were settled by the formal approval it received from Sixtus V in 1587.

We must therefore go very far back into the past in order to find the origin of this attribution to our Lady of a title like Mother of Good Counsel; and this is hardly surprising when we consider what she has always taught the faithful by word and by example in the gospel, which puts on to her lips that prudent and salutary counsel she gave at the marriage feast of Cana: 'Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye'. It is not often that she speaks in the gospel: twice in John, first when she appeals to her Son to relieve the embarrassment of the bride and bridegroom at Cana, and again when she gives advice to the waiters; five times in the infancy narrative of Luke, twice to the angel at the annunciation, twice to Elizabeth at the visitation, and once to her Child at the finding in the temple. In Matthew and Mark we never hear her speak. In fact she does not appear at all in the gospel of Mark except once,³ and then, as you might say, behind the scenes. It is on the occasion when our Lord is in a house with the enthusiastic Galileans crowded round him; a message is sent in that his Mother and brethren are outside seeking him. Contrary to what we might have expected, he does not spring up and ask the people to make way; but looking round calmly on those who sit about him, he declares that his mother and brethren are all those who do the will of his Father.

It would be very much beside the mark to suppose that, in asking: 'Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?',⁴ he wishes to renounce his Mother; though he who demanded such absolute self-surrender from his followers was prompt to renounce

³ Mark iii, 31-35.

⁴ Matt. xiii, 48.

everything and everyone that came between him and the will of his Father. His natural clinging to her, as hers to him, was part of his sacrifice. Not that she ever showed the slightest inclination to come between him and his Father's will; quite the contrary. And therefore his declaration detracts nothing from her honour, but rather doubles it; for none knew better than he that no one heard the word of God so readily and did it so faithfully as she. So she is twice his Mother. It calls to mind what St Augustine has to say on this point in forceful words quoted by St Thomas: 'The blessedness of Mary comes rather from her believing in Christ than from her conceiving Christ. Her maternal relationship to him would have profited her nothing, had she not more blissfully mothered him in her heart than in her body'.⁵

Both Matthew and Luke have recorded this incident, and it is their only introduction of her into the gospel narrative after their account of the birth and childhood of Christ. In John, after the marriage feast of Cana she disappears altogether from view until Calvary, and the fourth gospel alone mentions her by name at the foot of the cross. I hope it is unnecessary to reassure my readers that, in recalling these details, it is far from my intention to suggest that there is little scriptural basis for the great honour we pay to our Blessed Lady. Indeed it is my purpose to show the opposite. It is surely impossible to read the gospels without being conscious that she is always present if only behind the scenes, which is the place she prefers. Like the evangelists, she insists that the gospel is 'the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God'. Her principal part in the gospel is to guarantee the truth and the reality of the Incarnation, for which the Church has had to fight all down her history. Jesus Christ is God, Mary is a woman, but she is his Mother. 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?' Mark makes the awe-struck villagers of Nazareth cry.⁶ 'Isn't she one of us? Don't we know her? How came she to have such a son'?

Now when he decides to become man, God is in the unique position of being able to choose his own mother, and surely that fact imposes on our reason the necessity of drawing certain conclusions about what is fit and proper; *conveniens* as St Thomas would put it. The Church has never hesitated to draw those conclusions in developing the doctrine of the dignity and pre-eminence of the Mother of God. And little though the sum in

⁵ *De Virginitate*, cap iii; *Summa Theol.* III, xxx, 1.

⁶ Mark vi, 3.

words of what the gospels tell us directly about her is, it is more than enough to provide us with an intimate knowledge of her such as all the books written of her by pious but uninspired writers could never hope to convey. When God speaks, even through the instrumentality of imperfect but inspired human authors, he says much in few words; and what he says goes straight to the heart of the matter. As the author of Hebrews says: 'The word of God is more piercing than a two-edged sword, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart'.⁷ A parallel example could be taken from the case of our Lady's husband, St Joseph, whose person and character we seem to know so intimately; a knowledge gathered from the few words the gospels contain about him, and certainly not from the bulky volumes that pious authors have padded out with fanciful and unreliable details culled from apocryphal sources. Joseph, unlike his biographers, is the man of silence who passes through the four gospels without ever opening his mouth. But his silence speaks louder than words and reminds us of the lines of Francis Thompson:

'For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound *I* speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.'

Or maybe the matter is put better still by the word of St Peter Damian in one of his sermons:

'Silence itself cries out that some greatness is nigh'.

Mary does not keep silence in the gospels, but on the rare occasions when she speaks her words teach the same lesson as the silence of Joseph, the lesson that is always on the lips of their Son: that it is the creature's part to work for the establishment of the Kingdom (or rather the Kingship) of God. What is the good of being a king if none of your subjects takes any notice of what you say? The Kingdom of God comes, as our Lord says, when God's will is done here below as it is done by God's friends in heaven; that is, voluntarily, promptly and with delight. This is Mary's first and last counsel to us: first, when she bows to the mighty revelation spoken by the angel at her annunciation: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord'. I am God's slave, she says, and what is a slave but one who exists not on his own account but for the sake of his master? It is the lesson of Psalm 99 of Sunday Lauds: *ipse*

⁷ Hebrews iv, 12.

fecit nos et non ipsi nos, 'He made us and we are for him'.⁸ It is the sentiment expressed so finely in one of Shakespeare's sonnets, though he had not our Lady in mind:

'Being your slave, what should I do

But tend upon the time and hour of your desire?

I have no precious time at all to spend

Nor services to do save you require.'

It is her last word of counsel, too, when she makes her final appearance in the gospel, but this time it is a word of action and not of speech. The beloved disciple, a very aged man recalling the tragic memory of Calvary seventy years after the event, still sees the Mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross; with admirable reticence he sets down the words: 'Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother', and he leaves it at that. Fr Vincent McNabb used to say that the operative word in this sentence is 'stood'. She did not, as the old painters liked to imagine, fall in a faint or lean on that son to whom Christ had committed her care. In that hour she was the *mulier fortis*, the support of all his friends who were gathered there. She made no weeping protest against the injustice of what was being done; she did not, as other mothers would have done, attack the soldiery or the Jews. Like a soldier, she stood at the foot of the cross, calmly accepting what she knew better than John, who was one day to write it in his gospel, that 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son'. If it was his Father's will, then it was his Mother's will because she had taken up her stand as God's handmaid, and she never departed from it. *Sicut oculi ancillae in manibus dominae suae ita oculi nostri ad Dominum Deum nostrum*.⁹

This is the dominant principle of her life, and she shows it again in the canticle we call the Magnificat. Elizabeth, Luke tells us, is a very aged woman; but she shouts out her congratulations to Mary in a fashion very unlike an old woman. In striking contrast the young maiden replies quietly: Why congratulate me? I have done nothing worthy of praise.

'My soul declareth the greatness of Jahweh;

The joy of *my* spirit is in God, who is my saviour;

Because he hath deigned to notice his lowly handmaid.

⁸ The tautology of the Vulgate and Douay rendering, *ipse fecit nos et non ipsi nos*, 'He made us and not we ourselves', is due to a corruption of the Hebrew text.

⁹ Psalm 122.

That is why all generations shall call me fortunate.

For he that is mighty hath done great things unto me. Holy be his name.'

Another aspect of Mary's prudent counsel to us emerges from the gospel account of her visit to Elizabeth; it is the lesson of the pre-eminent claims of that fraternal charity on which her Son insists so vehemently. The angel's communication to her at the annunciation was of a character that would seem great enough to shatter the foundations of the human mind; great enough, at any rate, to render the mind oblivious to everything else. We might have expected that Mary would have remained a long time rapt in the contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation. But she is not only Mother of Good Counsel; she is also *Virgo Prudentissima*, and prudence is the virtue which infallibly directs the mind as to the right reason of the things that ought to be done, *recta ratio agibilium*. It not only guides the good man to do good things, but to do them at the right time and in the right manner. From the simple gospel account it would seem that, when 'the angel departed from her', the chief thing Mary remembered was the news that her aged kinswoman was at last to be blessed with her long-deferred hope of a son. Will not Elisabeth need strong young hands to help her? Mary does not delay: 'rising up in those days she went with haste into the hill country, into a city of Juda.' You would think that it was merely a matter of walking to the neighbouring village, whereas the traditional site of John the Baptist's birth is said to be some sixty miles from Nazareth as the crow flies, and some would put it further away still. St Ambrose, in the homily we read on the Friday ember day of Advent, draws a touching picture of the young maiden hurrying off to visit her kinswoman, *non quasi incredula de oraculo, nec quasi incerta de nuntio, nec quasi dubitans de exemplo; sed quasi laeta pro voto, religiosa pro officio, festina prae gaudio*. The reason of her hurry, he says, is not that she is incredulous, uncertain, or doubtful about the good news the angel has brought, as was the aged Zachary, Elisabeth's husband. Her happiness at the long-delayed fulfilment of her kinswoman's desire, the impulse to fulfil the pious duty of aiding the aged woman, lend wings of joy to her feet. Then, thinking of Mary climbing the hills of Juda, St Ambrose goes on to ask: 'Whither should anyone full of God strive to go with haste except to the higher places? *Nescit tarda molimina Sancti*

Spiritus gratia. The grace of the Holy Ghost knows nothing of sluggish effort.'

Here we are reminded that our Lady is the Mother of Good Counsel, as she is the mother of all the virtues and gifts, because she was full of God or full of the grace of the Holy Ghost from which all the supernatural virtues and gifts take their rise. Her fullness of grace was for a twofold purpose, as St Thomas says: 'The Blessed Virgin Mary obtained so great a plenitude of grace to make her fit to come into such close proximity with him who is the author of grace, and to receive within herself him who is full of every grace; so by being his mother in some measure causing grace to flow into every one.'¹⁰ In the preceding pages we have also considered how she is a moral cause of grace for us by the wonderful example she sets in her correspondence with that special grace of the Holy Ghost which in theology is called counsel. For the most part we have shown the words and deeds of our Lady under the aspect of what is called active counsel, that is, the giving of advice for those in search of sanctity. Her words and actions do that, indeed, as her devoted servant Bernard says: 'When you follow Mary you will not go astray.' We can borrow the lines of another Bernard, a contemporary of St Bernard, who expressed the same thought in more pleasing form, though he was addressing Nature:

Go thou, I follow;

For no man goes astray in following thee.

But the virtue of counsel bears a much wider meaning than merely giving advice to others. *Physician, heal thyself* was already an old proverb when our Lord used it in speaking to his fellow Nazarenes. Primarily, counsel is one of those good habits of the mind which are the necessary accompaniment of the virtue of prudence. The prudent man is one who is promptly and easily able to form a just estimate of the value of human actions in their relation to the right end of human life; and who further not only does the right thing, but does it in the right way, without any rash precipitancy, inconsiderateness, or inconsistency. Prudence is the *recta ratio agibilium*, right reason applied to moral action. But before a man can form such an estimate or act in such a way, he requires to take counsel with himself in the light of reason, experience and faith, and to hold an enquiry of reason concerning

¹⁰ *Summa Theol.* III, xxvii, 5 ad 1m.

the proper means to be adopted in order to gain his end in a suitable manner. If after such an enquiry he remains uncertain or in doubt, the prudent man will take counsel of those wiser than himself. And when the end of our desire is a supernatural end, and therefore shrouded in mystery, the means towards it must be supernatural also, for merely natural action cannot rise higher than the natural sphere; and all the more need there is to seek counsel from those whose dwelling place is in the supernatural sphere. This is where the Holy Ghost comes to our aid with sanctifying grace, from which flows the infused supernatural virtue of prudence along with its accompanying virtue of counsel. Nor is that all; for, although the infused virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance endow us with the supernatural disposition of mind and will which is sufficient to deal with the ordinary chances of life, in the life of every man seeking heaven there will come occasions of such seriousness as call for more special help of grace. Such occasions arise when not merely our right reason and good will perfected by the virtues direct us to good action, but when God himself inspires us follow his special direction. In order that we may follow the divine direction voluntarily, promptly and with delight, the Holy Ghost bestows on the soul along with sanctifying grace his seven precious gifts. St Thomas describes them as supernatural dispositions of mind and will by means of which the soul is rendered easily and sweetly movable by the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Not that he moves us like automata or inanimate things; his grace moves us through the gift in such a way that it is also our own voluntary movement. *Disponit omnia suaviter, in numero, pondere et mensura.*

There are seven gifts, as there are seven principal virtues and seven sacraments, for seven is the mystical number of completion and perfection; nothing is left unprovided for in the supernatural order. And for each of the virtues, faith, hope, charity, prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance, there is a corresponding gift. The gift of counsel corresponds to the cardinal virtue of prudence, and its particular purpose is to dispose the mind to obey the inspirations of the Holy Ghost in searching for the appropriate means that will most effectively carry out the will of God. 'Those who are the children of God are led by the Spirit of God', says St Paul.¹¹ And St Thomas adds that our mind, when

under the direction of the Holy Ghost, is rendered fit to direct not only itself but the minds of others.¹²

Here, then, is Mary's secret. She is the Mother of Good Counsel because she is full of God, perfect in every virtue, and absolutely obedient to every inspiration of the *Holy Ghost who came upon her* and of the *power of the Most High which overshadowed*¹³ her. In this as in every other respect she walked faithfully in the footsteps of her beloved Son, who was conceived in her by the operation of the Holy Ghost and in whom, as St Thomas says, 'it is manifest that the gifts (of the Holy Ghost) were present in a most excellent way'. The gospel assures us that consequently Christ in his human nature was always most perfectly under the movement of the Holy Ghost. After his long and mysterious wait at Nazareth—like the man who had waited thirty-eight years for the movement of the waters—eventually 'being full of the Holy Ghost, Jesus returned from the Jordan' (where he had received the impulse of the Spirit of God) 'and was led by the Spirit into the desert'. After the conflict in the desert 'Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee . . . and taught in their synagogues'. The gospels seems to suggest that his inaugural sermon was the one he preached in the synagogue of his own village of Nazareth; and what is his text? 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to captives and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of reward.'¹⁴ The text is from Isaias lxi, 1 and 2, and it is worth noting that some significant words are omitted either by St Luke, or by our Lord, or by both. The words are 'the day of the vengeance of our God'.

¹² II-II, lii, 2, 3m.

¹³ Luke i, 35.

¹⁴ Luke iv, 1, 14, 15, 18, 19.

HAVING OUR FACULTIES¹

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

KEEP the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us,² so St Paul brings out two sides of a relationship. First, ourselves who are told to keep the good thing, literally the deposit granted to us that we ourselves may render it to God; second, the indwelling Spirit, the Gift himself present in person. Correspondingly we may consider a double movement in prayer, the ascent of the mind and heart to God, which is what we do from grace and the virtue of religion, and the coming down of the Spirit who breathes through us so that we are rather acted upon than acting, who *himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God*.³ It is with the first we are engaged in this article, reserving the second until later.

Myself I always pause over the motto on conventual writing-paper which reads 'God Alone'. I can guess what it means, with the reminder that God is neither one particular sort of thing among others nor does he exclude his creation. Perhaps statements in religion which always have to be qualified are like rules which always have to be dispensed from or explained away—we are better without them. When writers who are certainly not pantheists in intention declare that all is God they may be true in a homiletic sense. In a deeper sense, too, modern theologians of grace warm to the teaching of Peter Lombard, the forerunner of the great Scholastic theologians, that charity itself is the Holy Ghost in our souls. After all, much is left out of the doctrine which insists only that grace is a special condition of human nature and a special quality of human activity: it may even decline to the impoverished notion expressed by the child when asked what a state of grace meant who replied, please, it's not being in a state of mortal sin.

St Paul, however, seems to draw a distinction. *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us*.⁴

¹ A continuation of 'Science in Holiness', *The Life of the Spirit*, xi, pp. 345-57. February, 1957.

² 2 Tim. i, 14.

³ Rom. viii, 16.

⁴ Rom. v, 5.

St Thomas certainly parts company with Peter Lombard. Paradoxically his argument is that slurring over the human response instead of dignifying charity detracts from it, for charity is friendship which is not all give on one side and take on the other.⁵ God gives us the power to give, indeed that seals him as the only full and perfect cause, *causa universalis*, for his is not a swamping causality but a creative and cherishing causality. He makes us us, he makes causes cause, his love makes our love ours, and in his friendship our friendship is born.⁶ *Divine wisdom reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly.*⁷

I

*I meditated upon the works of thy hands,*⁸ and so we start by glancing at the internal dynamic structure in which the Holy Ghost is lodged. *Know you not that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*⁹ Know thyself: that was a maxim of Stoic ascetical teaching taken over by the Christian writers; though it is doubtful whether St Thomas puts an emphasis on introspection and examination of conscience quite equal to that of some post-Reformation schools of spirituality, it is thoroughly in accord with his general method that we should know our abilities and decide what we can do before asserting what we ought to do. God does not command impossibilities, says St Augustine.¹⁰ It is by accepting the facts of our nature and learning from the sound teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church based on the Holy Scriptures that our vocation will be disclosed to us, an ideal better because truer than the strain and nonsense recommended to us by queer death-worshippers or our own underlying puritanism. Virtue, as St Thomas reminds us, consists more in being good than in being difficult.¹¹

In that sense, therefore, let us attend to ourselves, with humour and a sense of proportion. Of course the purpose is that we should arrive at a condition of natural and gracious unselfconsciousness. It is not the same as a state of anaesthesia. This you will not find the accredited authors recommending; indeed the overclouding of intelligence, the *obnubilatio rationis*, was the occasion of their

5 2a-2ae. xxiii, 1, 2. References in this style are to the *Summa Theologica*.

6 1a. xx, 2. xlvii, 3. cv, 5. 7 Wis. viii, 1.

8 Ps. cxlii, 5. 9 1 Cor. iii, 16.

10 *de Natura et Gratia*, 43. Migne PL xlv, 271.

11 e.g. 2a-2ae. cxxiii, 12, ad 2. cxxxvii, 1, ad 1. cxli, 8, ad 2.

being standoffish about sex. The unselfconsciousness to be aimed at is not the suppression of you and your awareness, but of your self-centred ego, awkward and all thumbs, preoccupied with your own reactions instead of being at ease. The object of the exercise is to find release, the justification of theological analysis is to inspire devotion. *In my meditation a fire shall flame out.*¹²

Practices all past, afterwards are we set free for intercourse with God. To this the happiest comparison is play, or even fun.¹³ Divine wisdom speaks of this joy: *I was delighted every day, playing before him at all times.*¹⁴ *Take thy pastime*, we are bidden, *and do what thou hast a mind.*¹⁵ The text adds, *but not in sin or proud speech.* The danger is the less likely if we keep to the modest moments of pure joy—the ting-tong-tang of a guitar, a child untying a parcel, the smell of the sea. We do well not to scorn the unpretentious, or mistake the humble for the drab and the meek or the feeble.¹⁶ Not deaf to so many echoes from the Scriptures, when we know how God *exalteth the humble*¹⁷ and learn from our Lord who was *gentle and lowly of heart*,¹⁸ then can we be mindful of his mercy. 'What of vile dust? the preacher said'—so Chesterton begins a poem attacking those who would despise God's visible creation, and so also St Thomas speaks of the *triviora vilia* providing the best analogies for the heights of theology; their very unpretentiousness makes for an absence of conceit.¹⁹ You will notice this about the classical authors on the spiritual life, they do not set off to go in for fine writing and they do not seem terrified about falling into bathos. Let us bring the lesson home to the hack-work of Scholasticism.

Admittedly we are not entrancing subjects contrasted with God. Sin is really rather tedious; what interest it possesses is not because of the sinfulness but, as St Thomas notes, because of the surround.²⁰ You might not think so to judge from the disproportionate amount of time and space spent on it by some manualists, especially on its not most important sector. But then, there was more theology in St Teresa's little finger than in the whole of, well, without disrespect, let us call him Leibig or Schiaparelli. If

Ps. xxxviii, 4. 2a-2ae. lxxxii, 3.

St Thomas, Exposition de *Hebdomadibus*, Prologue.

Prov. viii, 30.

15 Ecclus. xxxii, 15.

16 2a-2ae. clvii, 4. clxi, 3.

Luke i, 52.

18 Matt. xi, 29.

19 Ia. i, 9, ad 3.

e.g. 1a-2ae. lxxii, 1. 1a. xlix, 3. Disputations, I de *Malo*, 4, ad 2; III de *Potentia*, 16, ad 3; de *Virtutibus in communi*, 2, ad 5.

creatures hold boredom in their hearts it cannot be said that the Scholastic apparatus adds much to their fascination. The rigmarole of potencies and faculties and habits and acts and formal objects do we have to go into all that? Yes, to some extent we do.

The religious value of staying there is slight. *All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God, and who by these good things that are seen could not understand he who is; neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman.*²¹ Nevertheless we must know creatures if they are going to bear us to their source and end. The Church frowns on recruiting people to give up the world for God before they know something of what they are giving up. *Thus saith the Lord that formed the earth and made it, the very maker thereof, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited, I am the Lord, and there is no other.*²² There Isaiah proclaims the complete sovereignty of God and warns us to respect the created world: you could scarcely set him down merely as a humanitarian with mildly religious tastes.

The principle cuts both ways; it may not be a question of appreciating a pleasure but of experiencing a sadness. Later on when we come to consider the Gift of Knowledge, we shall find a sense of pity without patronage for the flaws in creation, a catch of grief in our affection. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*²³ For we should have a fellow-feeling with the body of humanity in which we are born and to which we belong. Our Lord himself *called his disciples to him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude,*²⁴ and he was thinking in the first place of physical hunger. Our spiritual life will profit more from joining the queue than staring up at a frieze of figures with expressions at once hieratic and vacant. A friend of mine—he would have been untouched by a sermon in church—became a Catholic after seeing *Broadway Melody of 1928*.

But what has this to do with dabbling in Scholasticism? 'All very well', you may say, 'for those who make a hobby of their spiritual life. Then they like the appropriate catalogue, like small boys with Hornby trains and others with *Reed's Nautical Almanac*, *Wisden*, or the *Catholic Directory*. They make interesting reading for those who like that sort of thing. I don't.' No cause for worry there—a religious calling does not demand ecclesiastical tastes.

Certainly not everybody is called to be a professional theologian

21 Wis. xiii, 1.

22 Is. xlv, 18.

23 Matt. v, 5.

24 Matt. xv, 32.

er even to be acquainted in an amateurish fashion with its technique. And certainly, as we shall emphasize in the course of these articles, there are ways even now of knowing God which cannot be reduced to statements about him, still less about ourselves. Like Hierotheus, who was *non solum discens sed et patiens divina*, not only learning about but experiencing divine things, we may perceive God through friendship and sympathy as well as through information and erudition.²⁵ For those who feel they can there let the matter rest, no more need be said; but there are many who would like to know how it all works, even if they are doubtful about the Scholastic mechanics.

In fact few can afford to dispense with the traditional categories, particularly in that part of theology which deals with human responses. Take, for instance, the distinction between meaning and willing on one side and sensing and feeling on the other. How important it is when we should make an act of contrition and yet are unable to screw ourselves into sensible emotion. The most useful sermon I ever heard in my life was by the late Fr Cortie—Jesuit and astronomer whose scientific training had done nothing to diminish his humanity—who showed why we should discriminate between this and that psychological act, for one was essential while the other was not.

If this holds true of the *incipientes* whose charity grows by avoiding sin, it is no less true of the *proficientes* whose charity grows with more positive virtues and gifts.²⁶ You are not asked to go introspective or to watch yourself working through the different stages of the spiritual life. Nevertheless you should not be like those who *either sacrifice their own children, or use hidden sacrifices, or keep watches full of madness*.²⁷ Hence some sort of enlightened self-knowledge is necessary for healthy self-discipline, so that you do not try to make your will feel, or what is less of a strain though rather more dangerous, you do not let your feelings take the place of your will. Similarly you will not pin your ideas to images or fancy that your images are ideas; and you will be spared the not uncommon fear that you are not praying because you are not thinking very hard. You will be provided with some sort of working distinction between infused contemplative prayer and acquired meditation, between resting quietly with God and knitting your brows over reading this article.

1a. i, 6, ad 3.

26 2a-2ae. xxiv, 9.

27 Wis. xiv, 22.

III

No, there is nothing for it but to do what Plato and Aristotle did, and talk of *parts* of the soul. If that is the case, then let us do it in their tradition, a tradition carried on by the great Scholastic theologians. It admits of variations. Thus St Augustine's division of the memory, understanding and will, echoed in the *Pennine Catechism*, was the foundation of his mystical teaching on man as the image of God and on the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.²⁸ St Thomas accepted it, but his own working division was somewhat different.²⁹ Then also there are all sorts of other divisions more or less useful, more or less complicated: Jeremy Bentham enumerated thirteen 'springs of action', including such headings as the Interest of the Spying-Glass, the Interest of the Altar, the Interest of the Gall-Bladder, and the Interest of the Pillow.

The traditional Scholastic division has the merit of being simpler and also of having been used by many of the great Catholic mystics since the thirteenth century. Sometimes they applied it for themselves and sometimes they relied on their confessors: we may name at once Tauler, St Ignatius, St John of the Cross, St Catherine of Siena, St Catherine of Genoa, St Teresa—none of them easily malleable or standardized temperaments. The first step is to focus on our properly human powers of knowing and loving, for it is with these in our eyes that the spiritual life is mostly engaged. We have other powers which we share with vegetables and animals; none of them is irrelevant, least of all good digestion.³⁰ If, as sometimes happens, duodenal ulcers appear to be an occupational disease with some religious groups, usually male, then it is unfair to put all the blame on the cook. Fr Aidan Elrington was interested in the correlations between virtue and diet and wrote a paper on the subject in the *Hawkesyard Review*. He died in the garden, as perhaps he would have wished picking peas for his community at Cambridge.

Normally and directly, however, the spadework for the Gift of the Holy Ghost is done at the level of consciousness and choice. Generically our powers of knowing are twofold, those that are essentially bound up with organic processes, namely our senses

²⁸ *de Trinitate*, ix and x. Migne PL xlii.

A. Gardeil. *La structure de l'ame et l'expérience mystique*. Paris, 1927.

²⁹ *1a*. lxxvii, 1, *ad 1*. lxxix, 6, 7.

³⁰ For the principles at work see *1a*. lxxvi, 7. xci, 3. *1a-2ae*. xxxviii, 5. 1, 1.

and one that is inwardly independent of the body, namely our mind or intelligence. The senses themselves are divided into the five external senses and the four internal senses, of which the imagination and the instinct for what is good for us are perhaps the most important in the life of the spirit: the division is traditional but not sacred. The mind is also called the power of reasoning from its function of putting two and two together, a necessity thrust on us by our present condition yet resented, as it were, by the mind which always seeks to achieve direct and intuitive knowledge.

Similarly our powers of loving are twofold, those that work through and in the body, namely our emotional appetites, and one that is intrinsically uncommitted to a physical organ, namely our will. The emotions, or passions as they are called by the scholastics, fall into two groups, those that react to emergencies and are governed by fortitude, and those that react to the pain-pleasure principle and are governed by temperance. The former are perhaps the more important in the spiritual life since fears are worse enemies than enjoyments. The will when picking and choosing means to ends is called, analogously to the mind's reasoning procedure, the free-will.³¹

All these powers have various functions, some of which are assisted or trained by habits.³² Some of these habits are good and are then called virtues.³³ Of these some we acquire for ourselves and others are infused in us with sanctifying grace.³⁴ The *Summa Theologica* enumerates more than ninety species, including the Cinderella virtues of *gnome*, a part of prudence which tells us how to deal with exceptional cases, and *eutrapelia*, a part of temperance which makes us gay on the proper occasions.³⁵ In addition to the theological, moral and intellectual virtues there are other habits called the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which more later.³⁶

IV

A formidable range of batteries! Fortunately they are not hostile, and the devout soul is not expected to charge into them

1 The general scheme will be found set in forth 1a. lxxvii-lxxxiii. Emotions, 1a-2ae. xxii-xlvi. On the precedence of fortitude over temperance, 2a-2ae. cxli, 8.
 2 1a-2ae. xlix-liv. 33 1a-2ae. lv-xl. 34 1a-2ae. lxiii, 3, 4.
 5 2a-2ae. li, 4. clxviii, 2. 36 1a-2ae. lxviii, 1, 3.

like the Light Brigade at Balaclava. All the same it is not surprising that attempts have been made to spike them, both by psychologists and by spiritual writers. We shall more accurately apprehend what the powers of the soul are and what they are not if we appreciate their objections.

Until about twenty years ago there was a strong prejudice among academic psychologists against what was called *Faculty-Psychology*. Partly it was a healthy protest against schools which had treated the soul as a piece of machinery which could be stripped down and taken apart into its bits. A living unity was made to look suspiciously like a mere bundle of powers, each of which could be scrutinized separately and in some cases be treated as acting on its own, though it was best to relate them by the principles of Associationism. Our powers were like so many different entities, or mannikins, as Spearman called them. All this was changed under the influence of more dynamic schools of psychology which insisted that the human person acted as a single whole and as such should be studied.

Two points are worth making here. The first, and less important, is that some psychologists of the Unconscious have aggravated some of the worst features of the out-moded *Faculty-Psychology* by treating psychic forces as if they were *things* and by turning a science into a mythology. The use of metaphors is valuable, but they tend to get out of hand, as when the conscience or its equivalent, is personified as a Mrs Grundy or her equivalent. The second point is that even those psychologists who reacted most justly against the exaggerations of *Faculty-Psychology* have been compelled to discriminate between various human abilities.

However our present interest is with the backwash into theology. Allowing for a time-lag we may notice a similar movement among spiritual writers away from the analytic abstractions of Scholasticism towards a more concrete presentation of the individual soul confronted with the living God of the Scriptures. It is the drama of Jacob wrestling with the mysterious stranger and left sprained but blessed, rather than the puzzle of searching into a system of reasons.³⁷ They too object to the usage of ascetical writers who refer to the religious mind doing this or the devout will doing that, together with the corollary that

³⁷ Gen. xxxii, 24-30.

the prayer of recollection is something like Pelmanism and that an act of the love of God depends on the will summoning up its will-power. Some practical guides which stem from this tradition go even further and almost suggest that an act of charity can be elicited irrespective of what goes on in the rest of us.

What had been neglected was the principle, often invoked by St Thomas, that persons are the true centres of human activity, *actiones sunt suppositorum et totorum*,³⁸ actions are of the whole substance. I am a single undivided substance which may be manifested through various *kinds* of activity. These can be the objects of scientific study, but any given act in fact is more than a *kind* or species, it is an individual event for which the whole self is responsible.³⁹ What acts is *me*, not my soul or my body, still less my powers, and though it is a convenience to talk of them as principles of activity this should not imply any real fragmentation.

I am not a committee of powers, and there is not, or there should not be, a psychological split such as would be opened were there a censor or guardian who watched my reason pursuing one line of thought, my imagination floating away, my sensuality taking charge. Too analytic a spirituality and you may find yourself recommended to make an act of charity; ready now, one, two, three, off you go, as it were into a vacuum. So also, take a deep breath now, pause—act of the presence of God. As if mind and heart can regularly work from a merely verbal stimulus or only from conventionally religious images! The life of prayer is not to be enclosed in a cell apart from the rest of the organism. Attempt it, then do not be surprised if it produces the grrr! of Browning's *Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister*.

Human activities all the same are not the undifferentiated responses of an undifferentiated subject to undifferentiated objects. Our environment is a universe of things which can be partly classified into really distinct types; that they are not just real types is true, but the arrangement is not merely a logical convenience. Now these distinct objects are engaged by different types of activity on our part, and these in their turn proceed from different abilities. The Nicene Creed is a different kind of formulary from the Declaration of Right and what I owe my bookseller is not like the rest of the money in my pocket; hence my profession of faith is not any sort of affidavit and the payment of a debt is called

³⁸ Thus 2a-2ae. lviii, 2. 3a. xix, 1, *ad* 3, 4.

³⁹ 1a-2ae. xviii, 8, 9.

justice not generosity. Such distinctions ramify throughout all psychology and moral science, indeed through the entire reading of ourselves and our universe. They are well understood when they crop up in ordinary speech, as when Sheridan said of a parliamentary opponent, the right honourable gentleman is indebted to his memory for his jests and to his imagination for his facts.

V

Mystical theology is but moral theology taken to the heights. It is difficult to see how it can be scientific, and not merely a documentation of mystical phenomena, without attempting some analysis and classification of human powers. As the psychologists who attacked an exaggerated *Faculty Psychology* have had to bring back the powers under other names, calling them propensities or abilities, so the spiritual writers who are rightly suspicious of a stilted artificiality still have to work with some of the traditional divisions. What they must then set themselves to do is to show how all are interconnected and unified in one single organism. That is the integrating role of the virtues which unlike the vices do not break out and go their own way as if they were pirate organisms preying on the whole.⁴⁰

Some survey of our powers of activity is but a preliminary. *I will behold the works of thy fingers, What is man that thou are mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him?*⁴¹ It is a question to be taken formally, and with no risk of identifying spiritual growth with the increase of self-knowledge or even self-control—those may follow as by-products. Christian holiness is not Yoga. Its main intent enlarges the second answer of the Catechism: to know God, love him and serve him. And really, is he not easier to know than we are?—there what a close stranger we hug to ourselves. How baffling, how fugitive, how muddled, how opaque we are: how unrewarding the examination of our motives. That we are is a sort of blind certainty, but what we are, that calls for a *diligens et subtilis inquisitio*.⁴² *Why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?*⁴³ No wonder spiritual masters teach us to turn outwards. How much safer,

40 1a. xlix, 3. 1a-2ae. lxxv, 1, 2. lxxdiii, 1.

41 Ps. viii, 5-6.

42 1a. lxxxvii, 1.

43 Ps. xlii, 5.

confident, generous; how much truer and better. *I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.*⁴⁴

Yet the calling to God's friendship is not to a surrender and then—humanly speaking, a blank. The 'I-Thou' relationship is not just a choice in a crisis; it is meant to last and penetrate all we do. Jesus Christ is not only Lord in the spirit; he is Lord of the world, of all of our little world. *Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge.*⁴⁵ So grace is expressed in the perfection of the present moment, the perfection of the immediate task. Yes, exclaimed Fr Vincent McNabb of our Lady's Annunciation, she was on her knees—scrubbing the floor.

It is in this temper, then, that we attend to ourselves. *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal godhead.*⁴⁶ If we dip into the analytic books on the subject it is not in order to become like the character in *Three Men in a Boat* who read a medical text-book and discovered he had the symptoms of every illness except housemaid's knee. Still, when we read of sins we may remember St Philip Neri looking at the felons going to the galleys, and reflect that we may not be able to complete his sentence, There goes Philip, but for the grace of God.

We are not like pieces which are moved about on a board, but bear powers rooted, thrusting, struggling, sometimes battling deep within us: *I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind.*⁴⁷ From this very agony St Thomas concludes that there is only one soul in man.⁴⁸ Here are powers strong enough to summon the nuclear energies at which we stand aghast, for what is destruction compared with the will to destroy? Moreover there is more activity within us than appears on the surface: Freud, Adler, and Jung have taught us that, and you can learn of our preconscious knowledge and the presence of God from St Augustine's *de Trinitate*.⁴⁹ Indeed before we recognize him God is there, holding us in being, giving us our powers, wholly causing every mode of their activity, sanctifying us with his grace before we deserve it.⁵⁰

A young Dominican priest—he is now an ex-prelate—was sent to a parish-house to supply for Mass before he had finished his

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁵ Ps. xviii, 2.

⁴⁶ Rom. i, 20.

⁴⁷ Rom. vii, 23.

⁴⁸ 1a. lxxxvi, 3. See 3a. xviii, 2, 3.

⁴⁹ *lib.* ix, x. See 1a. lxxxvii, 1.

⁵⁰ 1a. viii, 3. xliii, 6. xlv, 7. civ. I, 2.. cv, 5. 1a-2ae. cix, 6. cxii, 2, 3. cxiii, 2, 3.

studies or received jurisdiction to administer the sacrament of penance. A woman sought out the prior: 'Oh, the poor father', she cried. 'I saw him just now at the bottom of the church and I asked him to hear my confession and he said he was sorry but he hadn't his faculties. Oh, the poor father, and he looked quite nice and sensible to me he did who would have thought it!' Well, the faculties of which we are talking are more profound than canonical qualifications. They are parts of the dynamic constitution of our very being, and sometimes to be recognized as such if we are to bring *into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*.⁵¹



LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED

B. M. FREDERICK

PRAYER means turning our hearts and minds to God. No two persons converse with him in identical ways; even in corporate prayer we each infuse the same words with our individual needs and aspirations, and private prayer, whether vocal or meditative, is essentially personal. But we all have hearts and minds and, broadly speaking, the same problems: and the greatest of these is aridity. No one has ever advanced in the spiritual life without experiencing times when devotion seems non-existent, prayer distasteful or humiliatingly difficult, meditation moribund and discouragement an ever-present temptation, but though our books warn us of these trials our own experiences are different from anything we expect to undergo.

At first the spiritual life is straightforward. We know our faults and weak points and strive earnestly to eradicate them, and we make visible progress. We feel that we are doing well (as indeed we are) and prayer becomes increasingly attractive, our Lord becomes more real, we are more intimate with him and find delight in inventing small ways of pleasing him. If we have a gift for meditation pictures spring to the eyes of our mind and resolutions to our lips and our Lord whispers the sweetest words

to our ears: we feel we are becoming daily more spiritually alive. With eager generosity we want to devote ourselves to his service, we want to do great things for him, we want to prove our love. Nothing shall be too onerous, nothing too painful, no sacrifice too great. All very naïve, no doubt, but informed with a beautiful sincerity which, though untested and at bottom self-seeking, must nevertheless be very pleasing to our Lord. And in his own way he rewards it. Suddenly or by degrees he takes us at our word. We shall devote ourselves to his service, do great things for him and prove our love—but on his terms, not ours. We were children, thinking, speaking, understanding in a childish way: now we are to grow up in faith, hope and charity; and especially in charity. And charity, we soon find, spells aridity. It is all very bewildering. The weapons we had forged against the time when we would find devotion non-existent break in our hands. We had only to be patient and all would be well: or so we thought. The one point we failed to take into account was the fact that our Lord would blindfold us. It could hardly be otherwise. If we could prepare ourselves against aridity the trial would lose its meaning. If we could feel the ground firm under our feet, take our bearings from the bright and morning star and press on manfully towards the goal, we would never become spiritually mature. No two souls can suffer exactly the same aridity because no two souls are alike, and since grace perfects but does not destroy nature, the manifold workings of grace must vary with each person, but in every case the whole person must be purified and perfected and brought into conformity with the will of God.

Holiness consists, very simply, in loving God above all things. The only way of loving God above all things is to find out how lovable he is, and we cannot love a person until we know him. We can know God in three ways, by the use of natural reason and by the supernatural gifts of faith and charity, but only charity gives us intimacy with him. Charity unites us to God and as long as we are in a state of grace he indwells our very souls. God is immanent in all creation, but this indwelling is a particular and special presence and it is normally through the trial of aridity that we come to realize it. We are all familiar with sentences such as 'the Holy Ghost comes to our souls at baptism bringing with him his precious gifts' and most of us could enumerate and even describe the gifts; but are we equally conversant with the doctrine

of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost? Yet this doctrine lies at the very core of the faith. 'If anyone loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and take up our abode with him . . . and my Father shall give you another Paraclete and he shall abide with you and shall be in you.' In the Epistles this inhabitation is referred to again and again; there was no need for St Paul to explain what he meant, it was an essential part of the faith known and accepted by all. By charity we are united to God in such a way as to become participators of the divine nature and by the supernatural gift of wisdom we are given a personal knowledge of him; not knowledge derived from our own thoughts, no matter how high and holy these may be, but the knowledge of experience. The gift of wisdom does not teach us fresh truths about God and it has no connection with intellectuality; it gives us a personal knowledge of him. We possess God in our souls and know that we possess him, but in this life we see through a glass in a dark manner and can know only in part: in heaven, by the light of glory, we shall see God face to face and know even as we are known, but even in this world we can enjoy some faint reflection of the bliss which awaits us in heaven.

The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in our souls is the basis of all Christian mysticism, but we all possess the power to attain to some degree of this experimental knowledge of God. It is this that he intends to teach us during periods of aridity. It is a tremendous doctrine and one which should revolutionize our spiritual lives, but our poor finite minds and hearts are incapable of plumbing the depths and, though God has means of speaking to our souls without the intermediaries of thoughts and feelings, this experimental knowledge of his presence is, in one sense, more a matter of faith than of experience. He does not want it to remain in this undeveloped state; he made us for himself and even in this life he wants us to enjoy the fullest union possible. His invitation is always 'Friend, come up higher'; it is we who put a limit to our spiritual progress. We are all called to be saints and it is mock humility to say or to persuade ourselves that sanctity is not for us. We are here to fulfil God's will in our regard and since 'this is the will of God, your sanctification' our first concern must be to conform ourselves to that perfection. Perhaps the surest way is to have complete confidence in him. At bottom we are all reluctant

to put ourselves unreservedly into his hands; there may be nothing specific we would refuse to give if he asked for it, but handing over as it were a blank cheque requires more heroism than we feel we possess. God does indeed ask us for a blank cheque but at the same time he assures us that he will never ask for more than we are capable of giving and we know we can do all things in him who strengthens us. We need this confidence very specially during periods of aridity. God is calling us higher so that we can give greater glory to him by sharing a deeper degree of union with him: he wants us to know him instead of having thoughts about him; he wants us to love him instead of the gifts he gives us. That is the whole meaning of aridity and though the process is painful there is no need to make it worse by brooding on its dark side. We know, at least in theory, that sensible devotion is of no importance and that our thoughts about God fall infinitely short of their object. God's purpose in drying up the springs of meditation and feelings of sweetness is to give us a purer knowledge of himself. We cannot attain this through our lower faculties of imagination and emotions; if we are to increase our intimacy with him it must be done through the highest faculties of our souls, those of intellect and will, by charity and the supernatural gift of wisdom. This is in a particular sense entirely God's work. We can never do anything without him, but when he wishes to give us an experimental knowledge of his indwelling in our souls, we can do nothing at all. We can only remember those eager offers and promises of our earlier days to serve him and do great things for him and prove our love, and do our best to fulfil them now on his terms, not ours. God is dealing with our souls directly, he knows exactly what he means to accomplish and, agonizing as the operation may be to us, he requires complete passivity on our part. But passivity does not mean inertia. It means co-operation, the same sort of co-operation we demand from a small child when we are trying to dress him. He must stay still or move this way or that as we indicate, but we cannot dress him if he insists on fidgeting and twisting round to see what we are doing, and impatience on his part will only prolong the period of being dressed. Passive co-operation requires much fortitude. All our spiritual scurryings to and fro, all our restlessness, our worry, our feelings of futility and insecurity, our felt repugnance for prayer, our doubts and difficulties, our dismay at our lack of devotion—

all the myriad forms that aridity takes in different souls—can be resolved only by blind surrender of ourselves into our Lord's hands. The crux of the trial is that we feel we cannot do it. We seem to have lost our own familiar friend in whom we trusted, and nothing will console us for the loss.

The truth is that we are living on two different planes; the familiar, sensible, lower plane of our imagination and emotions which, because felt, seem all-important and the higher, spiritual plane of charity which unites us with God and which is entirely beyond our apprehension. We have to learn (or rather allow our Lord to teach us) to ignore our feelings and to live by the spirit. We can do this only by keeping our eyes on God. To do so when maybe we feel doubtful if he so much as exists is difficult but not impossible. It means disregarding our feelings and living as if everything were normal in our spiritual lives. We cannot be unaware of feelings of desolation and the rest, but at least we can do our best to rise above them, not taking them too seriously, not brooding over them, not inflaming the insect bites by constantly scratching them. We need to be very faithful to our customary hours of prayer and if we seem incapable of praying then we must ask our Lord to accept the distractions and lack of devotion instead. It is humiliating not to be able to attend to what we are saying but our Lord reads our most secret thoughts and understands us infinitely better than we understand ourselves and it may well be that deep down beneath all the surface commotion and coldness we are conversing with him in the way he desires and learning the very lesson he intends to teach us. As time goes on we may become more aware of this secret communion between our souls and our indwelling God, at least in the sense of realizing in an inchoate and intangible way that we only want his will to be done, and then we shall attach little importance to our feelings. We must never forget that though aridity can rightly be regarded as a test of our love and fidelity, to be manfully endured in union with our Lord's sufferings, it is far more than that. It is the means God uses to unite us ever more perfectly with himself. He is fashioning us to his own image and all our pains and discouragements and humiliations are caused by the whittling away of self-love. In the earlier days we wanted to acquire virtue to advance in holiness not to honour our Lord but to stand well in his and our own estimation. It was cupboard

love, sincere but childish; we wanted the gifts more than the giver and we wanted to expend them in our own way. Aridity, by slow stages, strips us of this self-seeking by increasing in us the pure love of charity; and charity always wants to give, not to receive. The only gift we can offer to our Lord is our own nothingness for him to build up into the likeness of himself and we can offer that only by submitting to his will and by suffering in patient hope and co-operative passivity the transformation it is his dearest wish to bring about. It will necessarily be a long and painful process and one against which we can make no preparations for it always assails us in an unexpected form, but if we understand the underlying reason for these periods of aridity we shall be far better able to co-operate with God's plan for our sanctification.

Those of us who know of the appalling trials suffered by saints and other advanced souls may be tempted to feel that as we would be incapable of bearing similar privations it is useless for us to embark on the spiritual life, but this is a fallacy. Our Lord will never expect us to run before we can walk, he will never give us more aridity than we can bear and if at some future time he should vouchsafe us a high degree of the experimental knowledge of his indwelling in our souls he will also give us the grace to endure such sufferings as this may entail. There is nothing for us to fear as long as we remain faithful to the life of the spirit and want, even when we seem incapable of putting our desire into practice, to cast our care upon the Lord, knowing that he has care for us. Throughout the whole Bible God is constantly urging us not to be afraid, not to be discouraged, not to be weary in well-doing and though from time to time he sets us 'in a desert place where there is no way and no water', he will never allow us to die of thirst. Some of the saints apparently spent the greater part of their lives in a state of aridity but even they enjoyed respites from their trials, and for us lesser mortals the desert is likely to be well-studded with oases. As we come to these and drink our fill of the living water we find ourselves greatly enriched by the experiences we have undergone. We are unprofitable servants and we know it; we have tasted of the Lord and found that he is sweet, but we can give no coherent account or explanation of what has happened or of what we mean: we simply know that it is so. And with this supra-sensible knowledge we take up our spiritual lives again, but on a different level . . . and in God's good time face

another spell of aridity which, no matter what form it may take, will be different from anything we may have prepared for. But the previous trial, whether the first or the twenty-first, will have left us with a whole scale of new values. We no longer find naïve pleasure in computing our spiritual progress, our responses are too hopelessly inadequate to be worth considering. We know now, or at least we have begun to realize, that holiness means doing God's will, not having pleasant feelings about him, and that in some indefinable way our sojourn in the desert has simplified our entire lives. The faith is a whole, not a number of doctrines; our spiritual life is a whole, not a number of devotions; our everyday life is a whole, not a heterogeneous collection of fragments and everything is reducible to the will of God. Our prayer is different, too, less enthusiastic maybe, less colourful, less articulate but incomparably more nourishing than our early efforts. And with all this there is a quiet abiding dissatisfaction with ourselves. On the rare occasions when we do recognize one of the scanty triumphs grace has won we are only too well aware that our fiat was made in a state of no-enthusiasm. We spoil everything: or so it seems. Yet if another person told us of a struggle in which the soul submitted no matter how reluctantly to our Lord's demand we would see it in terms of victory. We would think little of the remnants of selfishness and conceit that surrounded the final act; torn out of the soul by the roots we would expect to find a few shreds of fallen human nature adhering. But apply that commonsense reasoning to ourselves, we cannot. In our own case we can see nothing but the self-love and lack of generosity; we know indeed that with the grace of the Holy Ghost we co-operated sufficiently to tip the scales God-wards, but what a poor and meagre response . . . we will try to be more generous next time. And we do try. And each successive attempt seems even poorer and more meagre than its predecessor, and our apparent failures throw us ever more completely into God's hands. If he wants us constantly to fail (or to feel that we fail) then we must accept it as his will: that is the only thing that really matters and, though he hides it from us in all our endeavours, that is the whole secret of the spiritual life. We see it plainly enough when considering others; it is only towards ourselves that our eyes are blinded. We grow in spirituality in proportion as our knowledge of God and of ourselves increases

d deepens. We tend to measure everything by his standards and the more intimate we become with him the more humbled we are by his infinite perfections, the more overwhelmed by his love and majesty: and the more abashed by our own nothingness. For indeed we are less than beggars, clothed and nourished by his bounty. He called us into being, but for his ever-present conservation we would fall back into the nothingness from which we came; he has raised us up to be not only his adopted children but participants of the divine nature and, if this were not enough, he has assumed unto himself our human nature that being one with him he might know by experience what temptation and sorrow and shrinking yet absolute surrender to the Father's will can mean. Always for our consolation in our manifold trials and aridities and apparent failures we have that piteous and sublime figure in the garden: 'Father, if thou wilt remove this chalice from me: not yet not my will but thine be done'. And when we unite our reluctant, fearful fiats with his we know they are of infinite value to him. We know that he, indwelling our very souls, has made the surrender for us and yet accounts it wholly ours. It would be false humility to pretend otherwise and pride to ascribe the surrender to ourselves. We know these things but in some mysterious way God hides them from us so that we see only the reluctance, the lack of generosity that seem to spoil our gift. 'Without me', said our Lord, 'you can do nothing.' But with him we have done something, faulty and feeble as it may be we have done something, and may we not take courage from this reflection and remember that in spite of aridity and despondency and dissatisfaction nothing but sin can separate us from 'the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'.



VOCATIONS AND THEIR RECOGNITION: III

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

COMING to the second element of a religious and priestly vocation, we learn from the Roman Catechism that those who have a divine vocation who are called by the legitimate ministers of the Church. This in no way contradicts what we have

said about the divine call; rather it is very closely connected with it. For the divine calling of a man to the religious and priestly state destines him to a life in public of holiness and to the exercise of a hierarchic ministry, in the visible, hierarchic society of the Church; consequently such calling ought to have also the confirmation, admission and guidance of those hierarchic rulers to whose administration the Church has been committed by God.¹

In these words the Holy Father makes it clear that there would be a kind of contradiction in a vocation to the religious life or priesthood that came simply from God and did not have besides the approval of the Church, that is, of responsible ecclesiastical superiors. It would be a contradiction because it would mean either that God was taking a matter that concerns the visible hierarchic functions of the Church out of the hands into which he has chosen to commit those functions, or else that for all his omnipotence he cannot master those hands if he will; for one of these two situations must arise if the genuine voice of God should invite a man to a way of life within the visible body of the Church, but the divinely authorized voice of the Church effectively bars him from it.

We should never lose sight of the fact that a vocation to religious life even without the priesthood is not something that concerns simply the perfection of individuals. It concerns the whole Church as a visible, hierarchic society in so far as religious orders and congregations, ecclesiastically approved, form part of its public structure and organization. Individuals may force their way into these orders, as they may also force their way to priesthood, without a divine invitation. They may also be received and welcomed by ill-advised and imprudent ecclesiastical superiors, and have no divine call. But they cannot have a genuinely divine invitation to such life and fail to be received by superiors. If this could possibly happen, it would mean that God proposed but man disposed; it would mean that God no longer ruled his Church.

Of course, this does not mean that every first refusal of ecclesiastical superiors to receive a religious aspirant proves the absence of any true vocation from God. Sometimes superiors are dull instruments of God's will, only gradually fulfilling his purposes.

1 A.A.S., May 31, 1956, page 357.

Sometimes, no doubt, God's purpose is to test and strengthen an aspirant's perseverance by the initial show of resistance. But what does emphatically mean is that there can be no ultimate appeal to some subjectively experienced call of God as conclusive proof against the refusal of a superior; if superiors refuse an application to enter a novitiate or seminary, or turn away a candidate in the course of training, it is no use his adopting the attitude that they are effectively thwarting some true vocation from God to which his conscience bears him unchallengeable witness. The one thing that is certain in these situations is that, at least then and there, it is not God's will that the aspirant continue where he is; his vocation is not to be found there; if it were, God would make it possible for him to remain. That he does not, is clear sign that it is not his will.

After what we have seen, in the earlier articles, of the difficulty of recognizing with any certainty the presence of the grace of a divine calling, it must seem a happy thing that there should be this external and objective criterion of ecclesiastical acceptance by which to judge it. Of this at least there can be no doubt. If I am refused admittance to a religious Order, I can, for the moment at any rate, have no vocation there. Negatively, the criterion is complete. Positively, it is less complete, since acceptance by superiors is no guarantee that I shall persist, nor even that I must absolutely be right in going ahead here and now. But at least it is a strong pointer in that direction, and, in normal circumstances, a clear indication of God's will. In practice, the readiness or not to accept the decision of superiors in the matter of a vocation is often what shows most clearly whether the suggestion comes originally from God, or only from self-will. The victim of a self-appointed vocation cannot conceive that he must submit it to authority. The recipient of a true vocation from God finds it no more difficult to submit himself to the divine will manifested to him through superiors than in the first place to have submitted to the invitation from God directly. The one has the habit of submission, the other the habit of self-assertion.

We have however been considering only one aspect of the ecclesiastical vocation, its aspect from the point of view of the aspirant. It should also be considered from the point of view of the superiors who provide it. When an aspirant is turned down by superiors he may indeed be morally certain that he does right in

accepting that decision without further question. But the superiors have not the same easy assurance that in turning him down they must have been right. This ecclesiastical decision is a help in the recognition of a vocation to all except those who are required to make it. From them it requires the utmost exercise of prudence.

Partly the decision is a question of assessing whether a divine call is present. I have said enough of the lines such an enquiry must take in the two earlier articles. But partly the decision has to be formed on an estimate of whether there are in the aspirant such qualities as provide the necessary conditions for the grace of a vocation. To this matter we must now turn.

I have already commented, in the first article, that these qualities should not be confused with the vocation itself, whether on its divine or ecclesiastical side. They are rather the conditions necessary upon the part of the recipient of a vocation; without their presence it would be absurd to suppose that there could be a genuine vocation; but they may be present without there being a vocation. It would be absurd, for example, to suppose that God had given to a woman a genuine vocation to the priesthood, since it is one of the conditions to the receiving of Holy Orders that one be a male. But this does not mean that every man has a vocation to priesthood. Similarly, there are (less obvious) requirements upon the part of the recipients of this or that vocation which must be present if we are to say there is a genuine vocation but may be present without the vocation. Here again therefore we have only a negative criterion of the presence of a vocation. It is however one of the most useful criteria, to be employed both by the superiors who have to decide for or against acceptance and by the aspirant in making up his mind whether to make the attempt or not.

What then are these qualities? It would be impossible to give a list, since what is at issue here is the whole balanced character of the aspirant. What he lacks in one direction may be compensated for in another; the whole complex of his personality must be peculiarly his own, not a bundle of common qualities shared in indifferently by this man and that. Then again the qualities required for one type of religious or priestly life are quite different from those required for another; for example the qualities of health and physical endurance may be required of the missionary that are not required of the parish priest, qualities of

Intellectual formation required of a teacher that are not required of a lay brother.

There are, however, certain general qualities of character and make-up which, normally, must be found in every candidate for priesthood or religious life, and which form the basis for any further special requirements of special vocations. They are obvious enough, and yet not always in practice recognized, so that it may be useful to attempt an outline of them here.

Let us classify them roughly under three headings: first, qualities of health, physical and mental; secondly, general character and disposition; thirdly, talents appropriate to the special vocation undertaken.

There is a tendency in some quarters to suppose that whilst it is important that a candidate for religious life should have the necessary physical toughness to stand up to the daily routine of the life to be lived, it is less important to be exacting about nervous or mental instability. It is thought, for example, that the shelter and security of a convent or religious house will provide a solution to people of an emotionally immature type, or of slightly neurotic tendencies. This is almost the exact opposite to the truth. I should say that whereas quite large allowances may be made in regard to people physically handicapped, one can hardly be too stringent in requiring of all aspirants to religious life, no less than to priesthood, really well-balanced and emotionally mature personalities. I think it is St Teresa who says somewhere that she does not mind admitting to her convents people physically weak, but that with melancholics there is nothing she can do; and certainly her despair of dealing adequately with these, once admitted, is a subject to which she often returns: 'one person of this kind is sufficient to upset an entire convent'² if she should be given in to. For the truth is that the pressures brought to bear on a vocation upon anyone pursuing it will prove sooner or later too much for inadequately developed personalities; unless by some disaster such a personality should be permitted to turn the excessive features of religious life into forms of escape. Thus, the pressure of living in community cheek by jowl, day in and day out, with the most variously assorted persons very soon poses an insupportable burden upon socially ill-adapted types, unless they are allowed, by mistaken kindness, to live upon and

at the expense of the community. The pressure of responsibly accepted obedience, which requires a person to do all kinds of things he would not spontaneously choose to do, or not choose to do at the particular moment indicated, will soon find out and break someone interiorly ill-disciplined, or someone unduly liable to anxieties and scruples, unless, again, they are permitted to make obedience an excuse for the abdication of their own responsibility. The pressure of the vow and condition of chastity will besides twist up anyone not well-balanced and properly mature in his approach to sex, unless again he is mistakenly allowed to use celibacy and purity as an escape from recognizing the claims of that part of his human nature which he may have spent years in barring from his view. And one could go on mentioning one pressure after another that religious or priestly life brings to bear; it is a most peculiar notion that ill-adjusted persons should be acceptable candidates. Of course, even if the pressures are successfully avoided in the years of training by the kind of escapes suggested, this is only to lay up disaster for the future. Sooner or later, the dread reality will catch up with the fugitive. And one may suppose that in that day the persons responsible for the disaster in the sight of God will be those who admitted such a character and allowed it its illusions in the first place.

As for physical health, it is evident that superiors should not admit to religious life or priesthood candidates physically unable to bear the ordinary duties of the life to be lived. It is not sufficient that they should be able to pray; they must be able to take their share of all the rest of the life in question, though it may be reasonable to make exceptions where the essential outline of religious life is not affected. Thus, for example, it might be reasonable to accept as a lay-brother someone who was blind or had one arm missing, which would evidently preclude him from certain types of work normally undertaken by brothers but would not necessarily debar him from the routine life of the house and some share of its work; it would be less reasonable to accept a consumptive unable to lead the regular life. Most religious institutes have their own particular requirements in these matters; and for priesthood there are, of course, certain canonical requirements of physical health.³ The difference, how-

³ Canon 984, 2^o 3^o.

ver, between physical and psychological difficulties cannot be so heavily stressed. Whereas a physical disability does little more than impede this or that activity within religious and priestly life, psychological disabilities, even of an apparently minor order, give a twist to the whole approach to such life. It might be said, with the force but all the disadvantages of a generalization, that there is room for a true vocation in the crippled body with a healthy soul, there is not in the healthy body with a crippled soul. I have laid some stress on this point since there is a tendency sometimes to extend a false kindness to 'misfits' (somehow religious life will 'put them right'), and yet to be too rigorous in exacting physical fitness. It is in principle the same mistake as is made by immigration officers selecting men on the basis of their being good healthy animals; a materialist error.

Turning next to general character and disposition, it is not possible to do more than draw out one or two salient points. Perhaps the first and over-all requirement should be what St Teresa often enough calls intelligence. Of the reception of novices she says: 'They must have good health, and be intelligent . . .',⁴ and elsewhere: 'I do not see how a person lacking in intelligence can be of any use in community life, and she may do a great deal of harm.' 'In general, a person who has this fault always thinks she knows better than the wisest what is good for her; and I believe this evil is incurable, for it is rarely unaccompanied by malice.'⁵ Intelligence in this sense is certainly not to be equated with some kind of intellectual *expertise*. The vocation to being a lay-brother or lay-sister requires this intelligence just as much as any other. For there is a type of obstinate stupidity to which it is opposed, a kind of imperviousness to learning from others (perhaps this is where the malice, of which St Teresa speaks, enters) that may be exercised at every level of human performance, whether intellectual or practical. And such stupidity is an absolute impediment to the living out of a vocation. In simple people it may take the form of a kind of dull stupidity (such types are sometimes commended—how mistakenly!—as suitable lay-brothers. 'Fit for nothing else.' May God forgive us!); in more educated people it may take the form of pertinacious clinging to views, or personal ideals. All such people show little evidence of true vocation. It

⁴ St Teresa, *Constitutions*. Works, Vol. III, page 224.

⁵ St Teresa, *Way of Perfection*. Works, Vol II, page 57.

would be tragic if they were taken into communities by superior who preferred to have subjects too stupid to question orders than intelligent enough to be occasionally challenging. For the intelligent person is one with a questing and open mind; and his openness has two results; he is open to the demands of obedience but he is open also to new needs and new ideas, and though this is in no way incompatible with the submission required by obedience, it is incompatible with a kind of passive conventionalism that is sometimes mistaken for obedience.

This brings us to the next requirement of character, which may call, perhaps, general strength of character. It is sometimes supposed that some characters may be too strong for religious life. I confess that I find this difficult to admit. I read with surprise the following remarks: 'There are people who are made for commanding and managing others: their personality is too pronounced for them to accept second place. They might be excellent at running Catholic Action or founding charitable organizations or secular institutes; they will never make religious with the duty of remaining for years on end within the framework of obedience and the necessity of being just like other people.' I hesitate to disagree with the learned author of the article in which these words appear, and I may be taking them too literally in their context. But I would suggest that either the people described are in fact quite unsuitable for the tasks they are said to excel in (being forceful, but without self-discipline)—this may be why so often there is a disagreeable flavour of ruthlessness and egoism about the works mentioned—or else that the description of these 'managing' types is unfortunate and that in fact they are people of strong initiative and firm purposiveness. In the first case I should agree that the persons described are equally unsuitable to religious life and to the life of priesthood; but in the second, I should say that they are of all people those likely to make the best religious and priests. In this second case, their native strength of character, disciplined and canalized by religious training in obedience and self-control, can achieve its maximum attainment. It is an old saying that obedience is the best school for rulership. And what is true of such outstanding personalities, ought to be verified to some extent in every religious and priest; they must have a firmness of purpose and a power of initiative that will not

ow them to turn religious life into an escape from responsible human life.

At the same time, there is no doubt that besides these two qualities of intelligence and strength of character, one must look for a certain docility and affability. By the first of these qualities I mean that persons of over-critical tendency and such as are too ready to prefer their own judgment show little sign of having received a true vocation; they will never be pliable enough to be formed. But this verges upon that quality of intelligence already described.

By affability I mean the opposite of a cantankerous and individualistic disposition. Religious have to live in community, priests have to serve a larger community still, and if they are unable to be aware of other people they will never fulfil their vocation. Now, there do seem to be people so wrapt up in themselves and so little aware of others about them that nothing can be done to change them. It is this selfish pre-occupation with themselves and their own problems that I style individualism. It does not mean a disposition to be unconventional; individualistic people in this latter sense may make very good religious, because there is one thing that may deaden religion it is the danger of routine and conformism. The best safeguard against this is a certain originality of disposition, an original cast of mind and character. It may make their training difficult, they may easily pick over the traces; but there is nothing fundamentally wrong with them, nothing unhealthy. Such indiscipline is merely the excess of something good and excellent, that can be used in the fulfilment of a divine vocation. But the morbid preoccupation with one's own problems to the exclusion of consideration for others is quite different; where that exists there is very little hope of establishing the community spirit which is necessary in every religious and every priest.

These qualities then appear to me, from both experience and reasoned consideration, to be those we should look for in the recipients of a vocation. No doubt many others could also be mentioned, though they would probably not be of such general applicability. It must not be forgotten however that here, as well as in the vocation itself, the principle holds good that a gradual development is to be expected. Intelligence, strength and stability of character, equableness in society are not to be demanded in

their full maturity from young aspirants. They are qualities that ought to be fostered and developed by the slow training of those who have vocations. What may be looked for in the first place is the beginnings of these qualities; we must be sure that there is nothing in the character directly opposed to them. But it is a mistake made by some directors of young vocations to demand a standard from them, before ever they are accepted, that is seldom to be found even in the most mature. There seems even to be a pessimistic anticipation that people can only be expected to deteriorate under the process of growing up. 'If they are as bad as this when they are young, what will they be like when their first fervour has worn off?' That, surely, is a condemnation not of those who are beginning, but of those who train them and set them an example!

But these, after all, are the qualities which will suit men and women for success in any kind of life; they cannot be taken as indicative of a vocation? One must agree that this comment is right. Only, it is not an objection. I find myself in agreement with the words of Fr A. Bonduelle: 'These short considerations of aptitude (for religious life) could be expressed in very few words: some people obviously have no aptitude for the religious life. But the aptitude in question here belongs to the same domain as human qualities in general, and the position seems one of ambivalence. Aptitude gives us nothing in the way of a positive criterion of vocation. If you have no aptitude, then obviously God is not calling you. But if you have an aptitude for the religious state you have one for all the other states as well, because to this aptitude corresponds possession of all the other human qualities which would make for success in any state of life; and no conclusion can be drawn from it. . . . Signs of absence of vocation, i.e. lack of aptitude are found principally among the weak and the abnormal. A normal person is essentially suited to the practice of poverty, chastity, obedience, and even life in common.'⁷

It remains to say something of the talents appropriate to the special vocation undertaken. These do also help in determining whether a person has a vocation or not. Obviously they cannot here be enumerated since they vary with every form of priestly and religious undertaking. It must be enough to say they provide

7 *The Recognition of Vocation, in Vocations*, pages 44-47.

the clearest indication not so much of a vocation as such, but of the particular form that vocation should take. In the gifts of birth, and the opportunities in life that every man has, is to be seen always the finger of Providence shaping the future. That a man could never have had the opportunity of learning the humanities is not, for example, an unfortunate chance that debars him un-mercifully from priesthood; it is the design of God who may be preparing him for the positive vocation to sanctity of a layman.

(Concluded)



EXTRACTS

POVERTY is the groundwork of the Christian life. *La Vie Spirituelle* gives most of its February issue to the subject of the poor in spirit. Poverty, writes the author of the first article, inaugurates Christ's message. It occupies a primordial place. Not that it is the essential; the essential is love: it is by love that we are to recognize his disciples. But even the pagan philosophers were aware that love is the daughter of poverty. That is why poverty comes first. It is the first step without which there is no second. God's very first intervention in history had in fact been a call to renunciation, to detachment: 'Leave your country, your family, your father's house' (Gen. 12, 1). This, the first word that Abraham heard, balances exactly the Beatitude which opens the new Alliance.

He goes on to show how progress in the spiritual life is a progress in poverty, a progress in being dispossessed.

FOR RELIGIOUS, Fr MacEntee in *Review for Religious* (January) applies the doctrine in a practical if rather banal manner. He considers 'the squirrel within us', and how a religious will often collect books (because they may not be in the library), clothes because they may be necessary in an emergency of weather conditions). . . . The tendency of certain religious to collect ornaments has often been noticed; but, as Fr MacEntee says, as

he will have none of them at death the religious should begin to die now and to dispossess himself of everything but the really necessary.

ALL THIS is important for the apostolate as well as for the individual's spiritual life. Mgr Cardijn, the founder of the Y.C.W. movement, in a most vigorous address to priests (*New Life*, Jan.-Feb.) was really speaking of the same basic principles of Christian life when he said:

A thousand million workers' families are communist . . . this is every priest's problem and I am going to ask each priest to solve that problem through his priesthood, because the priest alone can solve that problem by his priesthood in every parish. There the problem must be solved if we are to solve the problem in the world . . . that is the spirit of this *little seed*, my little way, one boy one girl. Begin the salvation of the world in your parish, in this little way. It is foolish if we see it with the eyes of our body, but if we see it with the eyes of Christ, *nolite timere, pusillus grex*, fear not, little flock, I will give you the world. The greatest problem is the salvation of the working class. Without the working class the Church is not the Church of Christ. *Ite pauperibus, ite pauperibus, mitto vos ad oves perditas*. Poverty, charity and the apostolate of the poor are surely bound up in the Christian obligation of 'Almsdeeds'; and perhaps with this in mind the Editor of *La Vie Spirituelle* followed up the issue on Poverty with one on Almsgiving (March). The apostolate of the poor and the primacy of poverty cannot be realized without a true attitude to property and its obligation. Père Henry, O.P., shows that the two principles of common use and private ownership, far from being contraries, are complementary—and almsgiving links them together and keeps the balance. It is in fundamental doctrines such as these, which are so often overlooked by Christians, that the powers of the apostolate to the workers and the 'answer to communism' is to be found.

DEVOTION is mostly understood to mean an emotional reaction to sense stimuli in church—soft lights and sweet music. Fr Anthony Herring, C.P., recalls us to the true theology of devotion in an article in *Sursum Corda* for March.

True and essential devotion can exist without an overflowing

from the highest faculties of the soul into our emotional life. True devotion is not something that we receive from God. It is something that we *give* to God. True and essential devotion consists in the gift of ourselves to God, that act of the will by which we offer ourselves to the service of God. Religious life, then, is of its nature a 'devout life'; devotion is of its essence since the religious has given himself to that service.

ACCIDENTALLY, the Editor of the *Supplement of La Vie Spirituelle* in a blurb to the very excellent spring issue (No. 40) gives a clue to the main scope of this review. 'One of the objectives of this review is to bring its contribution to the objective and valuable discussion between the psychiatrists (from neurologists to psychotherapists) on the one side, and theologians and pastoral workers on the other.'

And also, *Review for Religious* in the issue already cited announces the inauguration of a new department in its structure 'Survey of Roman Documents'—which will be of great value to English readers.



REVIEWS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST JOHN. With an Introduction and Commentary by C. C. Martindale, s.j. (Stonyhurst Scripture Manuals. Longmans; 7s.)

More than a year ago we had occasion to welcome the first of the Stonyhurst Scripture Manuals, on St Mark's Gospel. The series, of which the present volume is the second, is intended primarily for schools and particularly for those preparing for public examinations. Its first purpose is fulfilled by giving the fruit of Catholic scholarship in such a way that the result is no mere school book but a work for which many an older layman will be grateful. Its use in schools in any case supposes the guidance of a teacher and teachers will find it a welcome addition to their shelves. The form is, as in the earlier volume, that of a short Introduction to the Gospel followed by a verse-by-verse commentary printed under the text. The notes seldom exceed a short paragraph but are skilfully done and of real value. While the General Introduction disclaims the use of 'devotional comments or applications

or for the most part strictly theological ones', in fact this simple straightforward unfolding of the meaning and message of St John will be found one of the best ways of acquiring a deeper understanding of the Faith, and so laying a solid basis for true devotion.

PETER WORRALL, O.P.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS. Edited and Introduced by Henry Tristram of the Oratory. (Sheed and Ward 18s.)

There can be few people of whom it is as true as of Newman that the prophet is without honour in his own country. During his life he was attacked right and left, by the Anglicans because he became Catholic, by Catholics because his ideas were so far in advance of his time that he seemed almost an heretic to them. Even now, while books and theses on him are pouring out on the continent, there is comparatively very little work done on him in this country, there is not even a modern edition of his works. Hence the present collection of hitherto unpublished very intimate autobiographical writings and notes is all the more to be welcomed. If one thing stands out from them, it is Newman's unrelenting struggle for perfection which began when he was almost a boy and went on till the day of his death. There is at the beginning of the present book an 'autobiography in miniature', the size of half a printed page, which was written on the back cover of a school exercise book. It begins on June 19th, 1812, when, at the age of eleven, 'he was going up to Greek on Tuesday', and ends with the entry: 'And now a Cardinal. March 2, 1884'. Perhaps the most moving passage in this curious document, written in 1829, is the revealing sentence: 'And now in my rooms at Oriel College, a Tutor, a Paris Priest and Fellow, having suffered much, slowly advancing to what is good and holy, and led on by God's hand blindly, not knowing whither He is taking me. Even so, O Lord.' Slowly advancing to what is good and holy, blindly trusting in the guidance of God, that is surely the leitmotif of Newman's life. He was not a picturesque Latin, whose way to sanctity led through frightening penances and sublime ecstasies; he was a sober Englishman, an Oxford scholar, and his wrestling was not with the flesh and the devil, at least not in the most literal sense, but with the incomprehension of his surroundings and with his own temperament. This struggle is mercilessly analysed in the journals now published, from which we would cite one more revealing passage, written during a retreat at Littlemore in April 1843: 'I have only to observe that I seem unwilling to say "Give me utter obscurity"', partly from a hankering after posthumous fame, partly from a dislike that others should do the work of God in the world and not I.'

His were the temptations of the intellectual and the sufferings of a saint at the hands of his intellectual inferiors. For all those who would better understand Newman's character and his own highly individual way to God this is an indispensable book.

HILDA C. GRAEF

SEVENTEEN ANGLES UPON THE FLOCK. By Leo Trese. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)
 'I feel that I am pretty much an average priest', says Father Trese on the first page. We cannot help wishing that he were. He is, if he is not, I think it fulsome, pretty well what the average priest ought to be. And the book is very like Father Corry's book, *As We Ought*, only for secular priests whereas Father Corry wrote for religious. It is a conversational and slightly breezy analysis of what the priestly vocation should mean, i.e. of a practical priest's practical way of holiness in the daily life of a parish.

Seventeen angles upon the mind and heart of an ordinary priest in a parish: seventeen chapters of self-examination, honest reflection, practical advice. He is exhortatory, in a bluff, man-to-man sort of way, throughout, but what holds the attention is the string of sincere and unclouded remarks about the detailed realities of priestly life, as distinct from general ideals. He speaks from experience: he has practised before teaching.

Father Trese's previous book *Vessel of Clay* has been described by Father Martindale as 'remorseless'. There is perhaps a trace of that quality in the first chapter of this book, but hardly anywhere else. In many ways he seems to fall short of the standard usually placed before a priest. He seems content with very little preparation for Mass and thanksgiving after Mass, and he seems to be resigned to a lower standard of Latin than actually obtains among priests. His remark that it is legitimate to pray for an English breviary will produce varied reactions. But his remarks on prayer, on prudence, on money, on moderate activity, on parochialism, on wasted effort, on preaching, will reach the heart of every priest, secular or religious. This is a book that every priest should read at least once.

G. M. CORR, O.S.M.

EDITING THE GOSPELS. By Emeric Lawtence, O.S.B. (The Liturgical Press, Minnesota; \$3.90.)

For years I have been reading about the Bible as the source and tenance of mental prayer. But I have not been able to find completely satisfactory selections of the Bible so prayed.'

It is not easy to understand what the author means exactly by these evening words of his Preface; not easy, that is, if we refuse to admit

the suspicion that he has rather surprising notions about why and how we read God's Word in the Bible, and an unusual view of mental prayer. We become more uneasy when we read in the Introduction (and the remark is made by way of commendation) that 'Father Emeric actually makes the meditation for us'.

It is quite clear what the author has done: he has taken the Gospel for every Mass in the missal and constructed a dialogue in which he speaks to our Lord about the Gospel message. It is a one-way conversation in which God does all the listening. Presumably Father Emeric did not actually speak his thoughts out loud, but in reading these conversation pieces we are made to feel that he was always aware of an audience in the background listening in to him thinking out loud. Do we, for instance, when engaged in prayerful meditation, introduce parentheses to explain to God what we think he is telling us? Deleted from any of these 'I to Thou' meditations all second person singular pronouns, modify the vocative cases, and we are left with simple, straightforward, five-minute sermons. It is only out of the fulness of our contemplation that we preach at all, and there is no inherent objection to our reflections and sermons finding their way into print. But we do not meditate in order to preach a sermon or write a book. However generous we may want to be towards this immense labour of love, we cannot help feeling that the author has unconsciously made *contemplata aliis tradere* the object of meditation.

MURDOCH SCOTT, O.P.

A POCKET BOOK FOR CHRISTIANS, put together by a Religious C.S.M.V. (S.C.M. Press.)

A small book of prayers for all occasions, pocket-book size, by an Anglican nun. Anyone using it will be greatly helped to learn to pray 'without ceasing'. It is designed to be used by Christians of all allegiances. Catholics may well find it useful too. Our Lady's Assumption and Coronation are left out and the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and Life Everlasting are substituted for them, in the Anglican version of the Rosary at the end of this little book. What a pity. Our Lady's Assumption and Coronation give us the whole doctrine of the Mystical Body and Everlasting Life, and give it completely, because our Lady is the first-fruits of Christ's redeeming power, and is now in heaven where we hope one day to be. This is evidently not understood by Anglicans and accounts for their failure to comprehend the doctrine of the Assumption and its implications. Catholics who may use this book will continue to use the traditional way in praying their rosaries and thus to penetrate the mystery of the Incarnation in its fullness.